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ABSTRACT

This paper presents remarks on the future of the physical education profession by William F. Stier (State University of New York, Brockport), Pamela A. Milchrist (California State University, Sacramento), and Sy Kleinman (Ohio State University). Stier presented the "conservative" view that the field was doing well, that only fine tuning was required, and that no major problems exist that could not be taken care of in the normal course of events. He emphasized that the dominant approach to the future should be one of evolution to respond to future issues and political astuteness to recognize and promote the advantages of physical education. Milchrist argued that the physical education discipline, traditionally comprised of several sub-disciplines around fitness and movement, needed to take on "fresh garments" of critical thinking, cooperative learning, technology, interdisciplinary studies, and diversity. She presented examples of how the physical education department at her university expanded dance programs to include dance cultures and African Caribbean dance, strengthened the martial arts program as a window of understanding to Asian cultures, and revised basic skill courses to include opportunities for critical thinking and cooperative learning. These efforts have enabled the department to survive severe budget cuts and emerge in a very strong position. Kleinman argued for the just demise of physical education which, in his opinion, relies on teaching pedagogical strategies, rewards the creation of irrelevant minutiae, values scientific "correctness," and practices a scholarly elitism. (JB)

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The Future of Physical Education - Survival or Extinction

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A presentation made at the 1994 spring convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), Denver, Colorado.

It is very encouraging and exciting to welcome such a large group of professional physical educators for this afternoon session. Of course the title of this program -- The Future of Physical Education - Survival or Extinction -- is one which naturally should be of great concern to all of us, regardless of the level at which we are professionally involved.

The future of our profession will be examined this afternoon by three individuals from different parts of the country and certainly with different perspectives of where the profession is currently at and where the profession is going to go in the future. Dr. William Stier, Professor and Graduate Coordinator of the Physical Education and Sport department at the State University of New York, Brockport will share his vision of our profession from the so-called conservative perspective, that is, from the standpoint that there are many things that are being done quite well in our profession. At the opposite extreme, is the position presented by Dr. Sy Kleinman, Professor of Physical Education at The Ohio State University, Columbus. Dr. Kleinman will share his vision of a completely different, distinctively new profession. And, the third speaker, Dr. Pamela Milchrist, Chair and Professor at California State University, Sacramento, will take the moderate or middle of the road approach in viewing Physical Education today and in the future.

With that said, let me introduce our first speaker, Dr. Stier.

DR. STIER'S REMARKS FOLLOW:

Thank you. I am very pleased to be here and to share with you my perspective of how things are going in our profession and what the future holds for those of us who are professionally engaged in some way with what we

commonly refer to as PHYSICAL EDUCATION. As you have heard, my perspective of the profession - both present and in the future - is from the conservative point of view. That is, from the perspective that things are relatively fine within Physical Education and that only a minimum amount of what I call "fine tuning" is needed for our profession to continue to exist, grow and even prosper as the years pass. It is my contention that whatever changes need to take place within the profession will take place through normal course of events without any great, catastrophic upheaval in our profession or in our society.

From the conservative point of view - there are many very positive things about present day Physical Education. In fact, if there is one thing wrong today in the world of Physical Education (however one goes about defining those two words) is that we in our profession do not sufficiently promote what we are doing well. Rather, we seem to be like "chicken little" running around complaining about real and not so real problems instead of recognizing the strengths of our many superior programs. And there are many, many such programs. We constantly fail to sufficiently toot our own horns (both internally and externally) for all of our worthwhile efforts, programs, and results - at all levels.

The conservatives take the position that there are no really major or impossible problems that cannot and *will not be taken care of in the normal course of events* as we moving to the future. I remember my old college professor (Dr. Leo Kilfoy, St. Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa) telling me in the early 1960s that some people were of the opinion that Physical Education had so many problems and such severe challenges that in the future, say by the 1980s or at least by the 1990s that Physical Education would not exist that I and my fellow students might well be out of a job.

Funny, however, Physical Education still seems to be around and competent professionals still have jobs. And, the sky didn't fall in on our heads as predicted. Physical Education simply evolved during the past 30 years to what it is today - for better or for worse. In my opinion, it is for the better. Good programs survived and prospered while those deficient programs (those programs that failed to convince the "powers to be" that they were of worth) ceased to exist - as well they should. Superior Physical Education programs responded to society's needs, expectations and demands. AND, PHYSICAL EDUCATION WILL CONTINUE TO DO JUST THAT. Yes, there will be changes, naturally, just as the past 30 years have seen changes. But, the conservatives' position is that they see the process of the future as being one of evolution rather than revolution.

Today, Physical Education, generally speaking, is doing OK. Yes, there are some problems under the so-called Physical Education umbrella, but we are handling them. And, if not, then these programs which cannot "handle" problems, difficulties and challenges, will fall by the wayside and good riddance.

Thus, the key word is evolution. There is no need for a revolution in which we throw out not only the water, but the towel, the tub, the baby and even destroy the house in the process. Conservatives believe that there is no need for radical changes. We (Physical Educators) and our diverse programs will continue to evolve just as we have evolved into what we are today - in reaction to the needs of society and in light of the political and economical environments in which we find ourselves.

Perhaps, political astuteness is what we really need to master. By that I mean that we need to be more politically aware in terms of selling and marketing ourselves as Physical Educators instead of continuing to shoot

ourselves in the foot.

In summary, conservatives suggest that we be positive from each of our own particular perspectives and not be so self-destructive. There is also a need for increased assertiveness and political astuteness in recognizing and promoting the advantages of Physical Education - at all levels. Let us be proud of what we are and what we do. But let us not continually cry "chicken little" for all the world to hear and continue to be ashamed of being Physical Educators.

Thank you Dr. Stier. Now, Dr. Pamela Milchrist will present the moderate viewpoint in terms of the Physical Education profession and what the future holds for those in the profession and for the profession itself.

DR. MILCHRIST'S REMARKS FOLLOW:

Thank you. For the past three years, I have been chair of the Health and Physical Education Department at California State University, Sacramento. I became chair of our department in one of most fiscally challenging times in the history of the California State University system. In our department alone, we have had to withstand three significant budget cuts (over \$600,000) in a relatively short period of time.

To survive in this system, I worked on a daily basis with my faculty to strategically plan our approach to the system wide cuts. My nightly reading for the past three years has been Sun Tzu's classic, The Art of War. We have been at war, and we have survived.

Our approach has been to take what is unique about our discipline and put that uniqueness into the context of the University's stated mission. After three years of major battles, things have settled down somewhat, and

we've found that several parts of our program have been ranked as one of the high priorities of the University.

As things have settled down somewhat with our budget, I found that my reading changed from The Art of War to the Art of Peace, by Morhe Ueshiba. I would like to read you a quote from the Art of Peace.

Even though our path is completely different from the warrior arts of the past, it is not necessary to abandon totally the old ways. Absorb venerable traditions into this new art by clothing them with fresh garments, and build on the classic styles to create better forms." (page 49)

As physical educators, we have a rich history. We are who we are. We have a unique discipline which combines several sub-disciplines around fitness and movement. It is time however, to "clothe" our discipline with fresh garments. These fresh garments are: critical thinking, cooperative learning, technology, interdisciplinary studies, and diversity.

We need to build on our classic styles to create better forms. At my University, we looked within to see what we had in our discipline that would fit into the University's mission. While most universities dropped dance, we embraced it. We created new lecture, lecture/lab courses for the general educational program that included dance cultures and African Caribbean dance.

We looked at our martial arts program and realized the medium of martial arts provided a window of understanding of the Asian cultures. We created a three unit lecture/lab course that was accepted into the University's general education program in the area of the arts. Both of our dance courses and the martial arts classes meet the University's requirement for diversity classes.

To survive, we collapsed programs, revised courses, and restructured our entire curriculum. We reached out to our University with revised general education basic skill and movement classes that included opportunities for critical thinking and cooperative learning. We bought into

telecommunications and we are moving forward to including multimedia opportunities in our curriculum.

Our faculty assumed leadership positions on major decision making bodies on our campus. Whatever direction the campus moved, we were already there. We merely "clothed" our programs with new "garments" so that we spoke the same language as the campus.

Currently, we are collaborating with public schools and community colleges to strengthen our ties with each other so that collectively we are stronger. We are also exploring interdisciplinary community projects with our school and with other units on campus.

Study the teachings of the pine tree, the bamboo, and the plum blossom. The pine is evergreen, firmly rooted and venerable. The bamboo is strong, resilient and unbreakable. The plum blossom is hard, fragrant and elegant. I would like to think of our profession as the elegant plum blossom. Our roots are deep like the pine, and like the bamboo, we are strong, resilient and unbreakable.

Thanks Dr. Milchrist for sharing your department's efforts and providing a glimpse of how challenges might be dealt with now and in the future. And now, for our final panelist, it is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Sy Kleinman, Professor at The Ohio State University, who will address the future from the visionary's perspective.

DR. KLEINMAN'S REMARKS FOLLOW:

I remain pessimistic about chances of survival given the mentality and mind set of the "so-called" leaders in the field. I am optimistic about the creation and development of a different way of teaching and learning about

the "moving person" as a practice.

The demise of the institution of "physical education" as we know it doesn't bother me at all. It would be criminal to try to perpetuate this kind of physical education into the 21st century. It does not serve its constituency well, it does not attract creative people, it prepares technicians rather than teachers and it continues to flounder in search of subject matter it can call its own. It blunders along creating "fiefdoms" of separate, distinct and unrelated projects and sub-disciplines which have little or no meaning in and to the world at large.

I don't believe we are "burdened" with athletics. We lost athletics a long time ago because we chose not to be burdened enough. Because of our ambivalence towards sport, performance, art, science and excellence, we abdicated responsibility and now we are paying the price.

So I say good riddance to a physical education which:

- (A) relies on teaching tricks (read pedagogical strategies) rather than gaining understanding of the teaching/learning process which connects individual teacher to individual learner.
- (B) rewards the creation of irrelevant minutiae disguised under the label of research forcing young professionals to pursue quantity over quality.
- (C) values scientific "correctness" more than creative daring and risk taking thus encouraging mediocre science and the status quo.
- (D) gives lip service to wholeness and integration but continues at breakneck speed to invent segmented programs, courses of study, curricula and areas of specialization, all of which operate in a vacuum.
- (E) practices a scholarly elitism of the worst sort by refusing to

acknowledge the somatic wisdom of the body and the validity of a kinesthetic intelligence which becomes manifest in the living world of the gymnasium and the dance studio.

Thank you Dr. Kleinman for those challenging remarks. Ladies and gentlemen, you have had the opportunity to hear three different individuals share with you their distinctive perspectives regarding the status of the Physical Education profession as well as a glimpse of what the future might hold for all of us, for some of us, or for none of us.

I trust that you will take advantage of the remaining time we have this evening to gather in cluster groups to discuss one or more of these three perspectives in light of your own particular philosophies, professional circumstances and situations.

Hopefully, the comments presented today will serve as "food for thought" and enable you to develop your own perspective in terms of what our profession is currently facing and will face in the future - and what all of us can do (individually and collectively) to help prepare for the future, a future in which the profession of Physical Education not only survives but prospers and serves humankind. Thank you.